

Young People's Societies

CROSSING THE RIVER.

Topic for Sunday, December 12: Pilgrim's Progress Series.
XII. Crossing the River. 1 Corinthians 15:31-38; Hebrews 2:14-18.

DAILY READINGS.

Monday: Fear of death. Isaiah 38:1-21.

Tuesday: The Lord of death. Isaiah 43:1,2.

Wednesday: Looking beyond death. 2 Cor. 4:16-18.

Thursday: The gate to the better life. 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

Friday: An immortal heritage. 1 Peter 1:1-6.

Saturday: The promise of Jesus. John 14:1-10.

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Christ is the conqueror.

He took part of flesh and blood, "that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death—that is, the devil."

"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

The fear of death is born, first, of ignorance of its nature. It is the opening of a door to new and more glorious things just as much as it is a closing of the scenes of this life.

It is born again of consciousness of guilt. But if that guilt is all taken away, as it is if we have the righteousness of Christ, why should it hang over us still to shadow the passage to the other side?

"The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The Christian has the right to sing, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?"

Many speak of what they call "dying grace", and pray for it. This may be well. It has been added, however, that the best guaranty of dying grace is the presence of living grace. If we have grace to live by, we may be right sure that we shall have grace to die by.

The River of Death will be made passable. The Jordan was fordable, even at floodtime, when the occasion came for God's people to pass over it into Canaan. God's promise of all things to his people surely includes this last scene and all that will be needful to carry one happily through it.

The shrinking in the last hour and the dread of it must be all physical. We believe, long before death approaches, that we should not allow the higher nature to be dominated by the lower. Why should we not carry this to the very end, to the last crisis? The spiritual nature is just as important then as ever, and the physical nature as unimportant.

If the thought of sin, in the dying hour, unnerves the believer, why should not the thought of his Saviour buoy him up? That One who is a "very present help in trouble" is as near as ever, and he is more than a Helper, he is a Saviour. He gave himself for the believer, and put to the believer's credit the fulness of his righteousness. What, then, has the dying believer to fear? His sins have been laid on Christ.

Christ passed through the grave. He is the earnest and pledge of the believer's resurrection. He is the "firstfruit of them that slept". Those who follow him, to share in all that he accomplished, are to share in his victory over death and the grave. Our faith is small if it will not grasp the Saviour as "a whole Saviour", able to save "even unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him".

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Away in foreign lands they wondered how
Their single word had power!

At home the Christians, two or three, had met,
To pray an hour!

—Francis M. Nesbit.

Prayer Meeting

TOPIC—THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Week Beginning December 5. Heb. 9:11-15.

The design of the epistle to the Hebrews is to show to the Jewish readers, to whom it was addressed, the supreme excellence of Christ. To impress this essential and comprehensive truth of the gospel, Christ is compared to all those beings and institutions that were regarded as most sacred and most highly esteemed by them, and his superiority to all is demonstrated both by appeal to prophecy and to what Christ actually did and was.

In the foregoing context the inspired writer indicates the imperfection and temporariness of many of the rites, ordinances and institutions which the Jews had justly revered, but upon which they had placed far too great emphasis and which they had come to regard as final and permanent.

It is shown that the services of the priesthood were incomplete and inadequate. Into the first tabernacle the priests went continually, and the high priest once a year, indicating that a perfect sacrifice had not yet been offered, "The Holy Ghost this signifying that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest." There were gifts and sacrifices offered which could not make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience. The formal worship that was rendered was called "carnal ordinances imposed until the time of reformation".

In contrast with the inadequacy of this ceremonialism, which had its value as a means of instruction and as a form of prophecy, as well as procuring ceremonial righteousness, Christ had become a High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this (human) building, and the offering which he made was not "the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption". In verse 13 it is recognized that the blood of animals and ceremonial cleansing did sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. That is, they served the purpose of removing ceremonial guilt and defilement, which disqualified for accepted worship. But if these forms of cleansing, which was external and mediate, were efficacious for their purpose, "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God!"

"For this cause"—that is, because through the eternal Spirit he made a sacrifice of his perfectly holy life to God—"he is the Mediator of the new covenant".

Having offered a sacrifice of infinite efficacy and perfection, being himself priest and victim and altar and temple, his work is regarded as the seal and consummation of a new covenant, which comprehends in its provisions not only the needs of those who should accept him after this new covenant is completed in all its requirements and is ratified, but all believers who lived under the old covenant, which was one of promise and whose provisions were not finally fulfilled while that covenant was in force, but only ceremonially typified. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." Christ's death was "for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant", that all that are called, both those that were before and those that should come after, "might receive the promise of eternal inheritance".

We are here told of a covenant, existing between God and man, which is perfect in all its provisions by virtue of which he is able to save unto the uttermost all that come to God by him. It is true that guilty and lost man had no part in framing this covenant. Its terms were not suggested nor assented to by him. But it is also true that its provisions are such as make no requirements of guilty man except to receive by faith the benefits of that covenant. He has no part in the redemptive work other than receiving pardon and the re-